

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 EB-07 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 STR-01 OMB-01 CEA-01

COME-00 AGR-05 SAJ-01 NIC-01 BIB-01 /081 W

----- 070762

R 071558Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3739

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL KRAKOW

AMCONSUL POZNAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 1353

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PINT, PL

SUBJECT: GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ ACKNOWLEDGE MEAT SHORTAGE

1. SUMMARY: GRUMBLING ABOUT MEAT SHORTAGES HAS GIVEN WAY IN THE LAST FEW DAYS TO REPORTS OF MINOR PUBLIC DISTURBANCES IN FOOD MARKETS, TWO OF WHICH THE EMBASSY HAS VERIFIED. POLISH JOURNALISTS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE PUBLIC IS AROUSED AND IN BAD HUMOR OVER THE SHORTAGES, WHICH RECENTLY HAVE EXTENDED TO DAIRY PRODUCTS. IN PUBLIC SPEECHES ON MARCH 6, THE MOST IMPORTANT PORTIONS OF WHICH WERE LATER CARRIED ON TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAMS, GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ ADMITTED THE PROBLEM AND STATE THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM RESOLVE TO INCREASE SUPPLIES OF MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS.

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OBSERVERS REPORT THAT MEAT SUPPLIES IN WARSAW SHOPS HAVE

ALREADY INCREASED. WE DO NOT VIEW THIS EPISODE AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE GIEEK ADMINISTRATION IF IT MAKES GOOD ON ITS PROMISE TO ALLEVIATE THE MEAT SHORTAGE. A MORE COMPLEX AND POTENTIALLY MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THE LARGER QUESTION OF HOW THE REGIME WILL MEET THE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF INCREASINGLY MORE AFFLUENT WORKERS WHO ARE INVESTING MUCH OF THEIR HIGHER INCOME IN AN IMPROVED DIET BECAUSE THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF ATTRACTIVE BIG-TICKET CONSUMER ITEMS ON THE MARKET. END SUMMARY.

2. PERSISTENT REPORTS OVER THE PAST WEEK OF GROWING PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH THE SORTAGE OF MEAT, BUTTER, AND OTHER ANIMAL PORDUCTS SURFACED ON MARCH 6 WHEN BOTH GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM IN SPEECHES TO A NAA TIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE IN WARSAW SPONSORED BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN ON THE EVE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY. GIEREK MADE A BRIEF BUT FRANK REFERENCE TO THE PROBLEM, SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING A LOT TO IMPORVE THE SUPPLY OF FOOD TO THE MARKET, THERE ARE STILL PROBLEMS WITH THE MEAT SUPPLY "WHICH BECOMES MORE ACUTE IN CERTAIN PERIODS." HE ASSURED HIS LISTENERS, HWOEVER THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS MAKING GREAT EFFORTS "TO ALLEVIATE THESE DIFFICULTIES," AND HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THESE EFFORTS WOULD BRING "PERCEPTIBLE RESULTS."

3. IN HIS LONGER SPEECH, JAROSZEWICZ WENT INTO THE MEAT AND FOOD SUPPLY PROBLEM IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF THE POLISH HARVEST LAST YEAR HAD SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF EARLY SUMMER DROUGHT AND HEAVY RAINS DURING THE AUTUMN HARVEST. SUGAR PRODUCTION DROPPED FROM ONE MILLION 850 THOUSAND TONS IN 1973 TO ONE MILLION 467 THOUSAND TONS IN 1974. VEGETABLE OIL PRODUCTION DROPPED FROM 760 THOUSAND TO 530 THOUSAND TONS. VEGETABLE PRODUCTION FELL 13.7 PERCENT AND FRUIT PRODUCTION 6.3 PERCENT.

4. JAROSZEWICZ SAID THAT FODDER PRODUCTION HAD FALLEN SHARPLY. THIS, IN TURN, HAD A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND THE SUPPLY OF MEAT TO THE MARKET. NEVERTHELESS, HE SIAD THAT THE SUPPLY OF MEAT TO THE MARKET HAD INCONFIDENTIAL

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CREASED BEYOND THE PLANNED LEVEL AND THAT THE PER-CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF MEAT IN FEBRUARY 1975 HAD BEEN 3.4 KILOGRAMS ABOVE THAT OF FEBRUARY 1974. HE CHARACTERIZED THE PROBLEM AS ONE OF RISING EXPECTATIONS AND SIAD THAT THE POLITBIURO AND VOBERNMENT HAD IMMEDIATELY TAKEN NECESSARY AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BRING ABOUT AN IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT IN THE SUPPLY OF MEAT ON THE MARKET. HE SIAD THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO TAKING IMMEDIATE STEPS TO

INSURE A BETTER SUPPLY OF BUTTER AND MILK TO THE MARKET, BUT THAT THE BUTTERFAT CONTENT IN MILK WOULD NECESSARILY REMAIN REDUCED UNTIL PASTURES TURN GREEN AND COWS FRESHEN IN THE SPRING.

5. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE GRUMBLING FOR SEVERAL WEEKS ABOUT MEAT SHORTAGES, THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF ANYTHING MORE SERIOUS UNTIL THE PAST FEW DAYS. SINCE THEN, THERE HAS BEEN A SPATE OF RUMORS ABOUT PUBLIC DISTURBANCES IN SUPERMARKETS AND MEAT SHOPS AND PROTEST WORK STOPPAGES AT FACTORIES. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO VERIFY ANY OF THE REPORTS OF WORK STOPPAGES; ON THE CONTRARY, WE HAVE DETERMINED TO OUR SATISFACTION THAT SOME OF THEM WERE INACCURATE. HOWEVER, ON THE BASIS OF REPORTS FROM SEVERAL NORMALLY RELIABLE SOURCES, WE HAVE CONFIRMED THAT PUBLIC DISTURBANCES BY CUSTOMERS PROTESTING THE LACK OF MEAT TOOK PLACE IN WARSAW'S TWO LARGEST SUPERMARKETS LATE LAST WEEK. THE MILITIA WAS SUMMONED TO RESTORE ORDER IN BOTH CASES, BUT NO ARRESTS WERE MADE. IT MAY HAVE BEEN THESE INCIDENTS PLUS THE REPORTED THREAT OF WORK STOPPAGES THAT FINALLY IMPRESSED THE POLITBIURO WITH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION WHICH WAS DEVELOPING AND GALVANIZED THEM IN ACTION. THIS VIEW IS REINFORCED BY A REPORT FROM A NORMALLY RELIABLE AND WELL-INFORMED TELEVISION NEWS SOURCE THAT THE PORTIONS OF JAROSZEWICZ'S AND GIEREK'S SPEECHES WHICH DEALT WITH THE MEAT SHORTAGE WERE INSERTED AT THE LAST MINUTE.

6. COMMENT: THIS PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM BY GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ, COUPLED WITH THEIR PROMISES TO TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE SUPPLIES OF MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS TO THE MARKET, INDICATES THAT THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT ARE AWARE OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM AND ARE DETERMINED TO

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KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. THEY WILL HAVE TO DELIVER ON THEIR PROMISES IN ORDER TO DO SO. SO FAR THEY HAVE DELIVERED; OBSERVERS REPORT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN GOOD SUPPLIES OF MEAT IN SHOPS ALL THIS WEEK. BUT THE PROBLEM IS NOT JUST WITH MEAT. EXPECTATIONS AND REAL WAGES HAVE RISEN FASTER THAN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO SATISFY CONSUMER DEMAND. APARTMENTS, CARS, AND BIG-TICKET CONSUMER ITEMS, SUCH AS FURNITURE AND QUALITY MAJOR APPLIANCES, COULD SOAK UP THE EXCESS PURCHASING POWER IF AVAILABLE IN QUANTITY FOR IMMEDIATE OR EARLY DELIVERY. SINCE THIS IS NOT THE CASE, POLISH WORKERS ARE ATTEMPTING TO CONVERT THEIR INCREASED PURCHASING POWER INTO A HIGHER QUALITY DIET, WHICH HAS OVERSTRAINED THE CAPACITY OF THE POLISH PRODUCTION OF MEAT AND BUTTERFAT. JAROSZEWICZ INDICATED GOVERNMENT AWARENESS OF THE OVER-ALL PROBLEM WHEN HE REFERRED

IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CONTINUING HOUSING SHORTAGE AND THE
LACK OF MODERN AND FASHIONABLE CONSUMER GOODS.

7. HAVING PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED THE PROBLEM AND PROMISED
TO ADDRESS THEM WITH VIGOR, THE GIEREK ADMINISTRATION WILL
UNDLUBTEDLY DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TO DELIVER ON ITS PROMI-
SES. WE SUSPECT THAT FOR NOW THEY HAVE THE SITUATION UN-
DER CONTROL. FOR THE LONGER RUN, HOWEVER, THEY FACE A
SERIOUS PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH THE RISING EXPECTATIONS
OF INCREASINGLY AFFLUENT POLISH WORKERS WHO ARE NOT BASH-
FUL ABOUT STATING THEIR DEMANDS. #END COMMENT".

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, SUPPLIES, DAIRY PRODUCTS, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, SPEECHES, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, MEATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975WARSAW01353
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750081-0573
From: WARSAW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750370/aaaacclce.tel
Line Count: 181
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <05 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ ACKNOWLEDGE MEAT SHORTAGE
TAGS: PINT, EPAP, PL, (JAROSZEWICZ, PIOTR), (GIEREK, EDWARD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006